35. (new) The network site according to Claim 34 further comprising means for sending information via said network to said network addressable site having data representing at least said selected features when the user has completed the configuration of the product.

36. (new) The network site according to Claim 35 wherein one or more of said features has subfeatures capable of being selected by said user, and said total price value of the product is further in accordance with said selected subfeatures, and said data further represents said selected subfeatures for said selected features.

37. (new) A method for enabling product configuration market research comprising the steps of:

sending from a first computer system via a network to at least one second computer system a program enabling a user of said second computer system to configure a product by selecting the features of said product; and

displaying a total price value in accordance with user selected ones of said features in which said total price value displayed is capable of being updated as each of said features are selected or said selection of said features is changed by said user.

38. (new) The method according to Claim 37 further comprising the step of sending information via said network to said first computer system having data representing at least said selected features when the user has completed the configuration of the product.

39. (new) The method according to Claim 38 wherein one or more of said features has subfeatures capable of being selected by said user, and said total price value of the product is further in accordance with said selected subfeatures, and said data further represents said selected subfeatures for said selected features.

Remarks

Applicants hereby affirm the election of Claims 1-15 and 17-19 of the application.

Claims 1-15 and 17-19 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over

U.S. Patent No. 6,167,383 (Henson) in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,808,908 (Ghahramani). The present application relates to conducting market research in a manner not anticipated or suggested from typical on-line ordering system of Henson for configuring, purchasing, and arranging delivery of custom configured computer systems, as such on-line ordering systems have no capability of providing the unique market research information of the present application's method, configurator software, or system incorporating such software. See discussion in the present application at page 1, line 26, to page 2, line 6. As will be shown below, merely adding Ghahramani's method for measuring the usability of a system would not be combined by one skilled in the art with Henson to measure elapse time, since such elapse time measurement would have so many uncontrolled variables for introducing too much error to make such measurement practically uncomparable with others respondents for use in market research.

First, Henson enables a purchaser to configure in a received web page (FIGS. 3A-3C) a computer which is actually purchasable, in contrast with the present application where the configured product is unassociated with any real purchase transaction.

Actually purchasable?

Second, such web page (FIGS. 3A-3C) is incapable of recording the manner is which a user made their selections (i.e., selecting and deselecting choices) as impacting the final price, since the web page once filled out can only send final selections to on-line store (10) of FIG. 2 to record their purchase to either a shopping cart, or to place such order (see FIG. 6). Thus, it is not possible from such final selections in Henson to determine the course of selections and changes thereof to arrive at a final configuration of the computer. Those skilled in market research are well aware of the value of such information in tradeoff research analysis.

in

cls. 17-19 only

Third, each web page of FIGS. 3A-3C does not shown an updated price, unless the purchaser clicks "Update Price" button (72), and then wait for the on-line store's server to return another web page with the updated price (see FIG. 3C under header "Using this Page"). Thus, the user does not get continuous feedback in a displayed updated total price as selections are made or changed during the configuring process of the computer in the web page, unless they click button (72) and wait for another web page generated by the on-line store (10) to be received and then displayed with such updated total price. Column 6, lines 21-27, explains that the price is updated by pricing option module (28) of on-line store (10). Those skilled in the art are well aware of the unpredictable delays in communication over a computer network, such as the Internet or WWW, due to a variety of factors, such as baud communication rate differences between client computers and network servers, busy network servers, and differences in network

Not claimed to update automatically

traffic levels at different times of the day. Even if Ghahramani were added to Henson, as the Examiner suggests, such unpredictable communication delays generate too many variables effecting time to make a useful measure of elapse time for a purchaser to arrive at a configuration at an acceptable updated price, which clearly teaches away from such combination of Ghahramani and Henson as being obvious.

Fourth, there is no disclosure in Henson that the on-line store server records the selections of web pages of a configured computer with each updated price, until a configured computer order is actually stored in the user's shopping cart or such order is placed.

Cls 18

Fifth, Ghahramani describes a method for measuring the usability of a system for task analysis and re-engineering, and not to configuring the features of a product at an acceptable price. There is no teaching in Henson or Ghahramani providing motivation to combine these references for the purpose of measuring the time taken to configure a product, as the Examiner suggests. The Examiner states that such motivation to add Ghahramani to Henson is to help measure and improve usability of the Henson configuration system. However, the present application involves obtaining market research information on the manner a person configures a product, not for improving the system by which such information is obtained.

Just different motivation

For the above reasons, Claims 1, 8, and 13 are not obvious in view of Henson or Ghahramani, either alone, or in combination. Nevertheless, to clarify the claimed invention rather than to overcome the rejection, Applicants are amending Claims 1, 8, and 13 to describe the configuration information are being unassociated with any real purchase of the product. Accordingly, withdrawal of the 35 U.S.C. §103(a) rejection of Claims 1, 8, and 13, and their respective dependent Claims 2-7, and 9-12, and 14-15 is requested.

In regards to Claims 17-19, neither Henson, nor Ghahramani, describes or suggests recording changes in each of selected features and subfeatures until a product in configured, since Henson stores the final configuration when an order for a configured computer is stored in the shopping cart or placed, and does not store changes in selections leading to such final configuration. Thus, withdrawal of the 35 U.S.C. §103(a) rejection of Claims 17-19 is also requested.
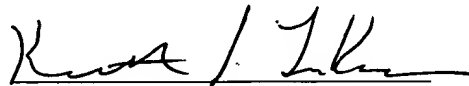
Applicants have amended page 14 of the specification to describe the exercise of configuring a product purchase as being hypothetical, and not a real purchase transaction. The entire application is directed for collecting market research, and not to any real purchase of any product. For example, no enablement of any actual purchase is described in the specification,

such as related how one would arrange payment or delivery. The use of the collected configuration information is described solely as relating to market research. Moreover, the person configuring the product is described in the specification as a respondent in a market research exercise. Such exercise is further described on page 14 as being useful for collecting market research information rapidly and efficiently from multiple respondents at their computers over a network. This is also set forth on page 1, lines 10-12. Thus, the amendment to the specification adds no new matter, and entry of this amendment is requested.

New Claims 20-39 have been added to the application, and are believed patentable over Henson and Ghahramani.

The application should be in condition for allowance, and a notice of allowance is therefore requested. A check for $744.00 is enclosed for the additional filing fee.

Respectfully submitted,

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Enclosure: Mark-up version of Amended Specification and Claims; and
Transmittal of Amendment with Certificate of First Class Mail with a check for $744.00

APPENDIX
Marked-up version of amended specification and Claims 1, 8 and 13

Please replace the paragraph on page 14, lines 1-14, as follows

The system 10 and configuration program is useful in market research for new product development, configuration building, optimal pricing, and needs-based segmentation. The server computer 12 may store the configuration information received from each respondent for a configured product in a database in its memory unit (e.g., hard drive), and provide statistical reports as the total price, subfeatures selected, elapsed time, or steps taken by the respondent in arriving at the final configured product. The configurator program provides a market researcher with information about the price the respondent is willing to pay for his preferred configuration of the product, while the timing information (elapsed time) provides the researcher with information about the amount of attention paid to the exercise by the respondent. The exercise of configuring a hypothetical product purchase (not a real purchase transaction) is useful for collecting market research information rapidly and efficiently from multiple respondents at their computers over a network. Usage of the configurator program within a survey, where the output is returned to the survey at the point of invocation, allows the researcher to control the remainder of the survey based on choices made by the respondent. The configurator software provides improved information to tradeoff research techniques, such as Conjoint and Discrete Choice Analysis, by letting the respondent direct his preferences.

1. (amended) A system for conducting product configuration research at computer systems over a network for a product having multiple features and for each feature a plurality of possibly subfeatures, said system comprising:

at least one first computer system connected to said network;

at least one second computer system capable of connecting to said first computer system through said network;

said first computer system sending an executable program via said network to said second computer system;

said program being executed by said second computer system and comprising:

means for enabling a respondent at the second computer system to configure the product by selecting at least one subfeature for each of the features of the product, and allowing the selected subfeatures to be changed by the respondent until the product is configured with final ones of the selected subfeatures, in which each of the possible subfeatures of the features of the product has a price value;

means for determining a total price value of the product in accordance with the price value of the selected subfeature for each of the features of the product as the respondent selects or changes the selection of the subfeatures for each of the features of the product, and displaying said total price value;

means for determining the time for the respondent to configure the product with the final ones of said selected subfeature for each of the features of the product; and

means for sending configuration information to the first computer system when the respondent has configured the product having at least the final selected subfeatures for the features of the product, all selected subfeatures for the features of the product until the final ones of the selected subfeatures, and said determined time, wherein said configuration information sent is unassociated with any real purchase of said product; and

said first computer system having means for storing said configuration information received from said second computer system.

8. (amended)   A method for enabling product configuration research by a respondent at a computer system over a network, said method comprising the steps of:

a) displaying the features of a product;

b) selecting one of said displayed features;

c) displaying possible subfeatures for said selected feature;

d) selecting one of said displayed subfeatures for said selected feature, in which each said subfeature associated with the feature has a price value;

e) determining a total price based on the price value of said selected subfeature and other selected subfeatures of the product;

f) displaying said total price value;

g) repeating steps (b), (c), (d), (e) and (f) for different selected displayed features until the selected subfeatures for each of the features provide a total price value acceptable to the respondent;

h) determining the elapse time until the selected subfeatures for each of the features provide a total price value acceptable to the respondent; and

i) sending configuration information to another computer system over the network representing at least said selected subfeatures for the features of the product, total price value, and the elapse time, wherein said configuration information sent is unassociated with any real purchase of said product.

13. (amended) Software for enabling product configuration research executable at a computer system comprising:

means for selecting features from a group of possible features for a product;

means for selecting for one or more of said features, at least one subfeature from a group of possible subfeatures for the selected feature, in which each subfeature associated with the feature has a price value and said combination of at least said selected subfeatures for said features provides a total price value;

means for displaying said total price value;

means for updating said displayed total price value as selected subfeatures change;

means for indicating that selecting subfeatures of the product is complete; and

means for determining the elapse time between start of said selecting features step and said indicating complete step, wherein said software is operative for conducting market research unassociated with any real purchase of said configured product.